

he pulled the door open a piece of paper which had been laid upon the knob fluttered down to the floor. He picked it up—it was a note addressed to himself. He opened it and read—

“Howard,

I am going to camp out to-night on Macnab’s Island, and with Burke and Curtis too, so that shows you what I care for what *you* say. You can tell mother if you like, I don’t care.”

His face hardened as he read and he crumbled the paper up and threw it into a corner of the room. He then went down stairs, and emerging into the hallway below he saw his mother standing in the doorway of a lighted room awaiting him.

Mrs. Stannard was a tall large woman, with a handsome pale face and thick black hair. Her pose was essentially stately and refined as she stood there in the doorway awaiting him. But her eyes were full of some inscrutable vexatious expression; and he, taking up the taskwork of his life, tried in perplexity to read it. For the peace of sleep had passed away and the old haunting trouble was with him as of old. The one passion of his days now was the fear that the tragedy of this house might be reenacted and that the doom of lunacy that hung over his mother’s soul might be fulfilled—and the struggle to prevent it.

As he came up his mother retreated into the room and he followed her. As he entered she broke into strange broken wailing, crouched in a chair and all the dignity of her bearing gone.

“Oh, Howard he’s dead, he’s dead! she cried.

He went quickly to her side and knelt down, taking her hand. Had the end come now? he thought.